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ABSTRACT

"Image to Word--Word to Image" is a professional development workshop which is part of the Pacific Center for the Arts and Humanities in Education (PCAHE) at the Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL). The program combines the cultural reality of the islands with educational research to create a vision in which visual arts and language arts are taught through one integrated curriculum. Image to Word seeks to do the following: improve language-arts skills such as listening, speaking, writing, and reading through art; focus on language and arts skills in narrative, expository and ethnographic areas; offer a spiral curriculum that allows teacher to tie standards to learning activities and apply them to appropriate grade levels; offer a culturally and ethnographically based approach; examine quality children's literature and discuss fine art or cultural artifacts; and offer children an opportunity to create their own books using words and images from their own cultures. (Contains 20 references, and 6 color and 4 black and white student-created drawings.) (PM)

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ED 465 163

Image to Word – Word to Image: Literally A Vision

By Lori Phillips, Ed.D.*

The sun is setting over a peaceful Samoan village. As you see the sun set, the sky is changing colors. The mountains near Aleipata in Upolu, Western Samoa, are blocking travelers from easily reaching the beaches. On the side of these mountains you can see the village farm. It grows most of the village food. On the side of the farm you can see coconut husks drying to be used for many things. The Samoan fisherman departs from his beloved home to catch fish for his family. He looks back and sees the fale in the sunset.

Mai le toafilemu o lo matou nuu i Samoa, sa va'aia ai le goto filemu ifo o le la. Sa va'aia ai f'oi le fesuisui'a i o lanu ese'ese i le lagi. O atu mauga o Aleipata i Upolu, Western Samoa, o lo o puipuia se auala o e malaga mai fafo, sa fia o'o lava i le oneone o le matagafa. Sa va'aia fo'i i nei tafa mauga, le tele o fa'atoaga a lo matou nu'u, aua lava le fofoga ta'umafa. Sa fa'apea ona va'aia le tele o fa'aputuga pulu popo e fa'amamago i le la. Masalo e fa'aaoga e tagata o le nu'u. E to'atasi lava se tagata fai faiva sa va'aia ua tu'ua si ona aiga pele aua se i'a e a'ai ai le aiga, ae aloalo malie atu lona paopao i le loloto o le sami, ae ua toe faliu tasi mai lava i tua, se i toe vaai atu i si ona fale o lo o tu m... le taimi tonu o le faliu o le la i lona.

* Dr. Lori Phillips is the Director of the Pacific Center for the Arts and Humanities in Education.

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Imagine a Vision

This story is a product of an Image to Word – Word to Image workshop. These professional development workshops offer teachers methodology for helping children write in descriptive language, using concrete images as a stepping-stone. The instructional approach is part of a larger educational vision, one in which teachers develop students' verbal skills by building on their visual experiences.

Imagine it . . . a classroom filled with visual treasures. Both children's art and fine art hang together on the classroom walls. Children talk about cultural artifacts and compare and contrast them with local art. Imagine a classroom rich in children's literature and picture books, where children read and enjoy rich, descriptive stories and colorful illustrations. Imagine children creating images of their own culture: their celebrations, their natural environment, and their everyday lives. Picture them describing, sequencing, writing, and reading their own descriptions and stories about their world.

What you have just imagined is the vision of the Pacific Center for the Arts and Humanities in Education (PCAHE) at PREL. The Image to Word – Word to Image program strives to improve speaking, listening, writing, and reading through art. It envisions improving art and critical thinking about art through language arts. This paper describes the program's vision and some of the standards-based language and arts experiences used to improve children's verbal and visual literacy.

Arts and Education in the Pacific

The goal of PCAHE is to improve education through standards-based arts and humanities education. Creativity, communication, and problem-solving skills acquired through one discipline can be naturally and readily applied to many others. The Image to Word – Word to Image program focuses specifically on improving literacy through art. In many parts of the Pacific, the local languages never had a word for art because it was a part of everything. For centuries there has been no separation of the arts from history, culture, language, or science. Life and teaching about life flowed seamlessly, allowing and encouraging one to enrich the other. The excitement and pragmatism of the arts often were the glue that held it all together. Today we recognize that children grasp even serious and rigorous topics when they are approached through the affective medium of the arts.

We call this a multi-intelligence approach. Solid scientific research has shown that it works. For years we have known that students learn better the more their senses are involved in their learning (Gardner, 1983). More recent research shows a positive correlation between the arts and specific curricula. In the 1980s educators began studying how language-speaking, listening, writing, and reading could aid in understanding art (Eisner, 1988). This was called discipline-based art education. We now refer to it as standards-based art education. In the last decade others used art as a vehicle to improve literacy. Image to Word combines the cultural reality of the islands with educational research to create a vision in which visual and language arts are taught through one integrated curriculum.

The Verbal Child and the Visual Child

Children who struggle in school often have language problems. For them, you could say words are not their first language. They process information through images instead of through words: they think and learn visually. Research shows that these children see the world in great detail. In *Envisioning Writing* (1992), Olson cites a study by Clemenina Kuhlman, who states, "Verbal children tend to do well on tasks that require a sensitivity to the conventional, culturally understood, functional qualities of things. For example a ball, a balloon, and a hula hoop would be linked together as toys. Visual children, on the other hand, tend to link things on the basis of recognizing patterns in the physical qualities. The ball, the balloon, and the hula hoop are all things they see as round. One might say verbal children are culturally sensitive while visual children are physically sensitive."

Since children who are visual learners respond poorly to verbal instructions, they are sometimes classified as slow or daydreamers. They may not participate in class discussions or follow instructions. They truly are at a disadvantage in the conventional public school. But nothing is wrong with them. They are simply different from verbal learners. They need to be offered visual learning strategies to aid them in reaching their full language potential. For these children, initiating assignments with the image instead of the word may promote language skills.

Image to Word: Improving Language Arts through Art

In an editorial in *The Reading Teacher*, a journal for the International Reading Association, the editors identify visual imaging as the new direction for building literacy. Studies that ask questions such as "How well do students connect words and images?" and "How well are they shaping these images?" will be the association's focus in the next few years.

Creating and using images as a vehicle to improve children's writing is a subject of research at the University of New Hampshire through a program called *Image-Making Within the Writing Process* (Olshansky, 1995). In this program, children construct collages to illustrate a story. Then they orally rehearse their stories, write them, and read the stories in order to revise their writing. The final products are published and kept in the school's library. *Picturing Writing: Fostering Literacy Through Art*, another program described by Beth Olshansky in 1996, employs a simpler artistic process. In 1998 the impact of both programs was documented. The findings revealed dramatic improvement in student writing, particularly among students who had been targeted as being 'at risk.' The results show that offering students visual kinesthetic tools for thinking and expressing ideas can be instrumental in their successful acquisition of essential literacy skills (Olshansky, 1998).

Visual images play an extremely important part in learning to read and in the communication of information, ideas, and stories. When parents and teachers read picture books aloud to children, the children formulate ideas and images as they "read the pictures." The illustrations plus the visual images that the child forms become central to what the child understands (Knoell, 2000). In some storybooks, images tell the story without the help of text. In her book, *Picturing Learning* (1994), Karen Ernst says, "When I ask a young child to show me writing, I'm as likely to be given a drawing as a draft. Children know what writers know: they write what we see." Paul Johnson, in his book *Pictures and Words Together* (1997), states that he believes visual literacy is as important as verbal literacy; they are interrelated processes. Diagrams, charts for history and science, and sketches in notebooks and journals all help children read and understand content.

In a 1994 evaluation of *Different Ways of Knowing* (DWOK), a well-known arts-infused school reform model, Galef Institute reported that teachers' instructional practices drastically changed when DWOK was implemented. This study found that integrating art resulted in:

- more teacher-student interaction,
- more student-student interaction,
- more connections to students' prior knowledge,
- deeper content understandings, and
- significant time for higher-level learning.

Research shows that reading scores are improved through art. According to a publication of the New York Board of Education Office of Research, students improved in reading for each month they participated in the *Learning to Read Through the Arts* program in New York City. In Ohio's *SPECTRA+* arts program, students demonstrated gains in reading skills, reading vocabulary, and reading comprehension compared to those in a control group with no arts exposure (Luftig, 1994). There is mounting evidence linking the arts to literacy. Some [illegible]ers refer to the arts as the fourth "R."

Word to Image: Improving Art Through Language Arts

According to the National Art Education Association, effective art education should encourage students to produce, read, write about, and interpret visual images (Qualley, 1986). The four disciplines of comprehensive art education are art production, art history, art criticism, and aesthetic inquiry (Dobbs, 1992b). The last three rely upon language skills to improve knowledge of art.

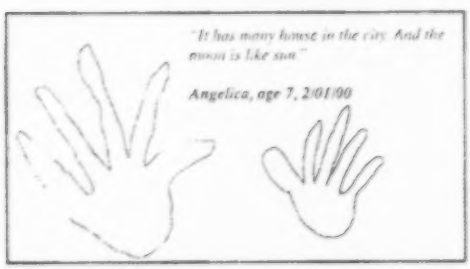
Art history is an important component in art education. When children are asked to write about or compare artwork of other cultures, they learn about art history (Eisner, 1988). Building students' allusionary (image) base helps them to make meaning in other's art and relate it to their own.

Art criticism asks students to interpret meaning and make critical judgments about specific works of art. David Perkins in his book *The Intelligent Eye* calls this "thinking through looking" (1994).

Reading, discussing, and writing about the nature of art engages students in philosophical questions. This is called *aesthetic inquiry*. Some big questions for discussion are: What is art? What makes certain objects art? Why do we value certain objects? Should we preserve them? Investigating these philosophical issues offers children opportunities to see that sometimes there are many answers to one question. Through carefully considered and articulated responses, students are able to contribute possible answers to the questions that have concerned people throughout the ages.

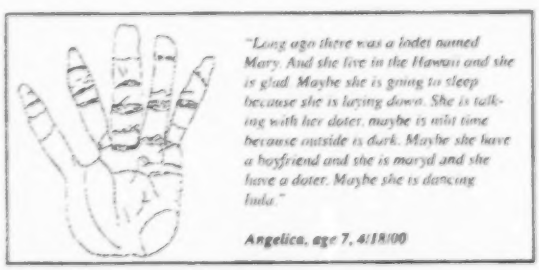
Work in the Region

There are several successful programs in the region whose goals are to improve writing and produce books in the local language. The Yap Seed Project trains young adult artists to design and produce beautifully illustrated, culturally appropriate books in their own languages. In Guam, Dr. Marilyn Salas has held a series of teacher's workshops promoting quality writing in students' first languages. Pohnpei's *Title VII Bilingual Education Project* proposes using the Image to Word – Word to Image process to improve first- and second-language literacy development. And in Hawai'i, Kalihi-Waena Elementary School, with the aid of a 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant, created an after-school program that successfully improved children's ability to draw, discuss art in depth, and write in a descriptive manner (PREL 2000a). The following are examples of the children's progress in a six-week period at Kalihi-Waena.



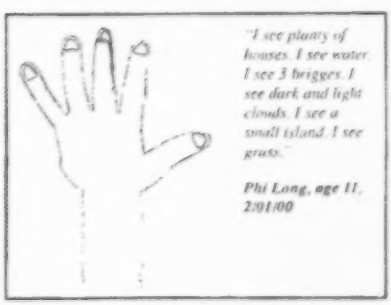
"It has many house in the city. And the moon is like sun."

Angelica, age 7, 2/01/00



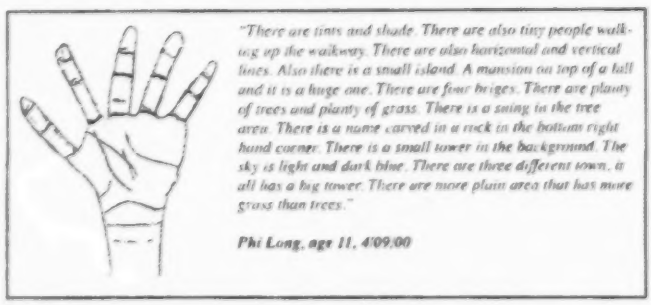
"Long ago there was a lodet named Mary. And she live in the Hawaii and she is glad. Maybe she is going to sleep because she is laying down. She is talking with her doter. maybe is mid time because outside is dark. Maybe she have a boyfriend and she is maryd and she have a doter. Maybe she is dancing hula."

Angelica, age 7, 4/18/00



"I see plenty of houses. I see water. I see 3 briges. I see dark and light clouds. I see a small island. I see grass."

Phi Long, age 11, 2/01/00



"There are tints and shade. There are also tiny people walking up the walkway. There are also horizontal and vertical lines. Also there is a small island. A mansion on top of a hill and it is a huge one. There are four briges. There are plenty of trees and plenty of grass. There is a swing in the tree area. There is a name carved in a rock in the bottom right hand corner. There is a small tower in the background. The sky is light and dark blue. There are three different town, it all has a big tower. There are more plain area that has more grass than trees."

Phi Long, age 11, 4/09/00

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A Description of Image to Word – Word to Image

According to an on-going needs assessment (PREL 2000b), research, innovative methodology, and professional development are needed to:

- improve literacy in native languages and in English,
- aid teachers in meeting language-arts standards and arts-education standards, and
- create culturally appropriate, child-made reading books in native languages.

The Pacific Center for the Arts and Humanities in Education, partially funded by the Regional Educational Laboratory, is currently focusing on professional development research and programs that integrate art and language arts through the Image to Word – Word to Image program. The program seeks to:

- improve language-arts skills such as listening, speaking, writing, and reading through art,
- focus on language and art skills in three areas: narrative, expository, and ethnographic,
- offer a spiral curriculum that allows teachers to tie standards to learning activities and apply them at appropriate grade levels,
- offer a culturally and ethnographically based approach (i.e., one that asks students to look for cultural meaning in both images and words),
- examine quality children's literature and discuss fine art or cultural artifacts,
- offer children an opportunity to create their own books using words and images from their own cultures.

The *Image to Word Project* uses standards-based art education experiences that include art history, art criticism, aesthetic inquiry, and art production. It affords students opportunities to write both in English and their own languages, develop knowledge of visual language, become more thoughtful, and develop abilities to raise questions, investigate concerns, and solve problems.

Our approach incorporates students' experiences, powers of observation, and desire for communication into a learning process that develops language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). At the same time, it develops students' ability to express themselves artistically. We have found that this synergistic approach to teaching visual and language arts enables teachers to meet required standards in less time than it would take to teach the curriculum areas separately. And because the technique uses local culture and arts as points of departure, the content is relevant and important to the students. A welcome by-product of the process is creation of texts in local languages appropriate to local cultures.

Image to Word – Word to Image in Action

The teacher begins each learning experience by reading from children's literature, discussing the illustrations, and relating them to fine-art examples. (This discussion enhances speaking and listening skills.) Then the teacher presents a mini-lesson in which she demonstrates the use of an art medium as she focuses on a specific art element, such as line or color. (This experience improves the quality of the child's art production.) Now the students are prepared for the image-making lesson, which will build on the language-arts experience. The image may be created first and the writing elicited from the image, or vice versa. No matter which comes first, or whether it is done in the child's first language or in English, the lesson relies upon established language-arts standards.

The following is a sample lesson observed and reported by Robert Soli'ai, program specialist at PREL's American Samoa Service Center, at the Family Literacy Conference in Samoa on August 10.

A Palauan storyboard was presented to the class. Teachers, parents, and children first described the board in detail. They observed that the carved board had many figures overlapping each other; the

figures were active, and they seemed to represent a myth or story. The instructor complemented the observations with a history of Palauan storyboards. (These storyboards are carved rafters that tell the myths and stories of the community in the men's houses of Palau.) She next read a Samoan legend from a children's book and then examined the book's illustrations with the participants. The students noticed that figures that were close to the viewer were drawn bigger, and those that were farther away were drawn smaller.

The instructor followed this discussion with a mini-lesson in figure drawing, demonstrating six different ways to use oil pastels. Together the participants then listed celebrations or special events in the Samoan culture. They used this list to create their images using the following criteria:

- Represent a Samoan event or celebration.
- Include at least one human figure.
- Demonstrate the use of at least four oil pastel techniques.
- Cover the entire page with pastels (no paper may show).
- Overlap your figures.
- Include a setting such as the sky, a building, or the ground.

When the participants were finished, the instructor chose one drawing as the focus of a language-arts mini-lesson. The students role-played what they had seen. Next, they brainstormed descriptions of the objects in the drawing. Some of these descriptions were:

- "The gray sky is waiting for the sun to come out."
- "She wonders when he will awake."
- "The Samoan sky is looking for the sun's rays."
- "The ocean screams violently at the rocks."
- "The shimmering ocean is waiting patiently for the sun to wake."

Then the students did the same thing in Samoan. Finally students chose sentences from the brainstorming session and combined them into paragraphs, first in English, then in Samoan.

The completed paragraph in English reads as follows: "The grey sky is jealous of the sleeping sun. She wonders when he will awake. While the shimmering ocean laughs and waits patiently for the coming day. It's Sunday and the young Samoan lady in her layered puletasi eagerly strolls to the Leone church."

The completed paragraph in Samoan reads: "Ua loto leaga the lagi efuefu i le moe o le la. Ua manatu po'o afea e ala mai ai le la. Aua o lo'o fa'atali le lagi mo le aso o lo'o afua. O le Aso Sa ua afu ai le tama'ita'i Samoa i le puletasi ma ua aga'i atu i le lotu i Leone."

This sample lesson illustrates how creating images first can help descriptive language in both English and the first language to emerge.

Recommendations

- Design a plan to help teachers become familiar with and accountable for the art-education and language-arts standards at every grade level and in every classroom.
- Offer professional programs that teach the content knowledge of both art and language skills.
- Offer professional development programs that help teachers integrate the two subjects and cover the standards for both.
- Start a visual arts resource library. Supply teachers with information about local museum programs and lending libraries.

- Start a children's literature collection in your library by using available funds or by initiating a donation program.
- Set up an area to make children's published books easily available to other children.
- Exhibit children's writing and images in schools and prominent places in the community.

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Men Carrying Yams
Michael Alfons, Age 13
Rohi Elementary School
Pohnpei, 1999

"This is a picture of two men carrying yams hanging down from a long stick with some grass on it. It is a kaahi. The way the yam is carried, and the way the grass is attached to it, is a traditional custom that shows there is a sperial occasion being celebraied."

Orange Canoes
Joseph Rapif, Age 12, Dalipebinaw Elementary School, Yap, FSM

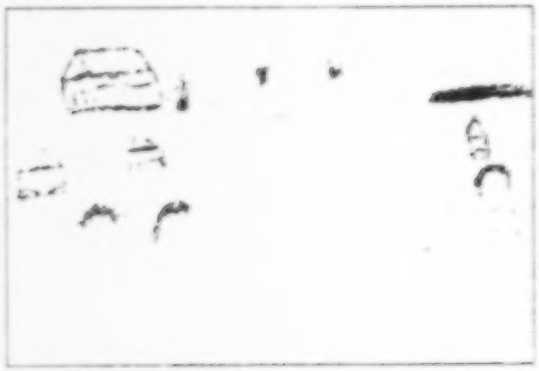
"This is a picture of the canoes made from my island. It is important because it is my island's transportation. You can see this kind of canoes in Yap, Palau, Pohnpei, Chuuk, and some other islands. It reminds me of Yap culture and it reminds me of people long ago riding it and fishing from canoes."

Samoan Lady
Rosemina Aigamuna, Maxwell Baptist Elementary School, American Samoa

"This is a picture of a Samoan lady that is going to church. She goes to church because she needs to. She is wearing a puletasi with blue flowers. Her face is black and her hair is black and brown. This church is the Holy Cross Church in the village of Leone. This church has three crosses on it. This Samoan lady is thinking about the umau which is a big lunch. On this day, we have pig, crab and lobster."

Five Chuukese Dancers
Jayleen Nakamura, Age 10
St. Cecilia School
Chuuk, FSM

"This is a picture of five Chuukese women dancing. They are in local costumes with their long hair loose. You can see this kind of dancers on Cultural Day, welcoming ceremony for important visitors and special guests to our island. It is exciting and fun to see it. I wish to be a dancer or just to be one of the dancers. People will learn our dance because it is passed from generation to generation."



Omengat – First Baby Ceremony
Reva Ruluked, Age 12, Koror Elementary School, Republic of Palau

"This is a picture of an Omengat, a Palauan hot bath ceremony after a woman gives birth to her first child. It is important to my island and I because it shows that a woman giving birth to her first child is important. You can only see something like this when there is a woman after her first child is born, and there is a hot bath ceremony. The oils that they use to cover the woman's body smells better than regular coconut oil. It makes me feel proud to be a Palauan girl. This picture helps to show a little bit of what Palauan customs are like and the way of life of Palauan people."

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